

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
DOLPHIN CLUB ROWBOAT, SLIDING SEAT SINGLE

HAER No. CA-2358

Location: Dolphin Club, San Francisco, San Francisco County, California

The watercraft is located at latitude: 37.80767100, longitude: 122.421293, which represents the Dolphin Club building. The coordinates were obtained from Google Earth in 2019. There is no restriction on their release to the public.

Date of Construction: 1948

Rig/Type of Craft: Rowboat

Trade: Recreation

Principal Dimensions: Length: 14', Beam: 4'

Designer/Builder: William Jennings Richards

Original Owner: The Dolphin Swimming & Boating Club

Present Owner: The Dolphin Swimming & Boating Club

Disposition: Active: Recreation, regattas, and piloting swimming events

Significance: Bill Richards of the Dolphin Club created this uniquely designed rowboat to better handle the rough conditions of San Francisco Bay. *Dino Landucci* is an example of this Dolphin Club sliding seat single design.

Description:

In 1948 Bill Richards designed, lofted, and constructed the original Dolphin Club Singles, "The Three Sisters" (*Baggiani, Foster, Landucci*), at the Dolphin Swimming & Boating Club (San Francisco, CA). *Dino Landucci* is being documented here to represent the original three boats as well as six others of the same design currently in use. Richards created a unique design to accommodate the needs of the club enhancing both their recreational use as well as ease of piloting swimmers throughout the Bay. Specific features such as a raked stem, less exposed dead wood, and a lower garboard increased reserve buoyancy for taking passengers or pulling swimmers from the water into the vessel. His design also included the ergonomic benefit of the sliding seat with D-Section oars and oarlocks. The scantlings of the sliding seat minimize the weight of the metal with sufficient buoyancy from the wood to allow the seat to float. The scantlings of both the oarlocks and gudgeons are robust enough to allow for years of active use, by different rowers in a variety of conditions, without replacement.

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In 1988, Jon Bielinski, the club's master boatbuilder, lofted *Dino Landucci* (the design in written format ceased to exist) which generated much of this table of offsets. The construction drawings show the boat's most current details refined by him over the years. Some modifications include reduced scantlings such as oarlock blocks, riser, quarter knees (lightening the boat – the “three sisters” each hover around 200 pounds); removable burden boards with locking toggles (for ease of cleaning and security); elongated mid-ship thwart knee (reducing thwart damage from storing oars). Nine vessels built to these lines are currently in active service at the Dolphin Club.

Materials: Port Orford cedar planking and various woods including Iron Bark, Black Locust, White Oak, Apple, and Douglas Fir. Silicon Bronze bolts and screws, Copper rivets, and Brass fittings. Le Tonkinois varnish.

History:

In 1877 John Wieland and Valentine Kehrlein, both immigrants from Germany, co-founded the Dolphin Swimming & Boating Club of San Francisco for the benefit of twenty-five charter members. The term “Boating” used in the club's name does not refer to sailing but to rowing, both for racing and recreation. The Dolphin Club is proud of its fleet of historic wooden row boats, some over a hundred years old but still used daily. These boats are mostly sliding seat lapstrake singles or doubles and durable enough for the rough conditions of San Francisco Bay. Volunteer club members, directed by a master boatbuilder, keep alive the fading skills required to repair and restore these aging wooden boats.

This document describes a boat design that originated with three singles, the *Don Baggiani*, *Sid Foster*, and *Dino Landucci*, built in 1948 at the Dolphin Club. They resemble Whitehalls, a once common wooden rowboat, but modified sufficiently to be classified as Dolphin Club Sliding Seat Singles. This document uses the lines and specifications taken from *Dino Landucci* to represent the others. The design has become the standard of our club singles. Four more have been built at the club between 1988 and 2016. Two others were built elsewhere to 1948 specifications. All nine belong to the Dolphin Club and are in excellent condition.

Bill Richards built those first three Dolphin Club Singles in 1948 in a handball court converted into a boat shop. William Jennings Richards was born in 1880 in Penance, Cornwall, England and immigrated to San Francisco by way of British Columbia in 1916 with his wife, Hilda. For the 1930 and 1940 U.S. Census records his occupation was “Boat Builder.” Richards developed his boat building skills during the 1920's in Thomas R. Keenan's shop in San Francisco. Keenan was born in 1870 and joined the Dolphin Club in 1892 as a competitive rower. In 1895 he entered the boat building business supplying and repairing racing boats for many Pacific Coast clubs. Thomas Keenan and his business both died in 1933.

Then in 1934 Bill Richards became more active in the Dolphin Club, maintaining boats and also being employed as the club caretaker. In March 1947, the Dolphin Club Board commissioned Richards to build the three new boats for \$400 each. A few years later, in 1950, he retired to Oroville in Northern California. Bill Richards died in 1959. As his occupation, the death certificate simply stated, “racing shells.”

The names given to the original three boats honor club members for their outstanding achievements, service, and leadership:

Don Baggiani was born in 1907 and died in 1999. He joined the Dolphin Club in 1935 and was the president 1943-44. A club member for 63 years, Don was a swimmer and champion handball player.

Sydney Foster was born in 1892 in San Francisco. He became a member of the club in 1913 and swam the Golden Gate for many years, winning the race three times 1921-24. He passed away in 1973 at the age of 80.

Dino Landucci joined the club in 1935, participated in many activities, and served as president in 1947. Dino is credited with holding the club together during WWII and the changes that followed. Athletically, he is best remembered for handball and rowing. Dino was born in 1907 and died in 1995.

Sources: Dolphin Club Board Minutes, boat shop records, publications, and membership records. These club materials are preserved in the Dolphin Club Archives, 502 Jefferson St, San Francisco, Ca 94109. Additional information was researched using historic copies of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Examiner* newspapers and genealogical data bases accessed on Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org.

Project Information:

The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) is a long-range program that documents and interprets historically significant engineering sites and structures throughout the United States. HAER is part of Heritage Documentation Programs, a division of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. Todd Croteau, HAER Architect, manages the HAER Maritime Program. Julia Hechanova prepared detailed boat specifications and scaled drawings. Richard B. Cooper contributed historical data and photographs. Both are members of the Dolphin Swimming & Boating Club, November 2020.

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Figure 1: The *Dino Landucci* Name Board



Figure 2: The *Dino Landucci*



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Figure 3: The *Dino Landucci*



Figure 4: Profile view of a Dolphin Club Single



All photographs taken by Richard B. Cooper on February 5, 2020